

Taking Care--Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers  
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2014-2015  
(AFC 2014/021: 01720)  
Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Sharronne Vincent interview, 2015-03-04 : interview conducted by Helen  
Marie Moss and Donald Eugene Stacy**

**INTERVIEW LOG**

00:00:00 - Set up.

00:00:31 Lives in Deer Island, she explains how the small town got its name.

00:01:27 Other jobs - eldest child, Bank of CA, waitress at fancy Eugene hotel, MA in curriculum development, taught school, taught adult education classes, owned a design house for gowns, then had an accident, returned to teaching, some work with Weyerhaeuser driving a fork lift. Paid twice as much at Weyerhaeuser than as a teacher. Needed the money. Retired, friend needed help with a client, that was her start, about 5.5 years ago. Very gratifying work.

00:04:45 Then this same friend was in an accident, so she provided care for her.

00:05:08 How did you learn skills? My brother suffered a head injury as a child, disabled, started over in learning everything. I took care of him when he was an adult. She tells a story about her brother receiving his first paycheck and how proud and excited he was.

00:06:35 What makes caregiving different? Much like being a teacher. Really care about the people, same kind of guidelines. You become aware of age in a way you never have before. You realize how fragile the elderly become. Amazing journey with each client.

00:08:26 Sometimes learn more than you want to. Family money issues (discussion about whether she should talk about an issue, whether it breaches confidentiality). Tells the story of the sister of a client who changed the mother's will and how it negatively impacted the client, but nothing she can do about these types of incidents except be there for them.

00:10:45 They are like your children, you care about them. Create stressors at the end of your day? Yes, the example of the sister that she just told us, that was stressful. Sister did not even sit at the same table with the client when they visited. You learn what you can do something about, and what you cannot do anything about.

00:12:14 Skills? Have to be patient, not react to what the clients do sometimes. You are walking into their house, their life. Stay positive. It can be very disheartening when their families don't come around so much.

00:13:35 You need to know what path to take to not offend them. Having a disabled brother helped me learn.

00:14:08 Typical day? Depends on personality of client. Two clients, very different. Describes the day with one client that she works with every morning. Most important thing is to interact with them. Become more than someone that just works with them, doing tasks.

00:16:20 In America we don't bring elderly into our lives like we used to.

00:17:00 Some people are old at 60, others are young at 102.

00:17:31 How approach intimate tasks? Carefully, if a gentleman. First consideration is modesty. Try to be very respectful.

00:19:15 Stories? Mother of her friend. Didn't want people to wait on her. Story about serving dinner and the client kidding her about the portion size.

00:20:26 Sense of humor? Essential. If don't laugh you will cry. Find things that bring them joy and laughter. Story about another client who would say "life is hard and then you die," and her 5 year old grandchild called her on it.

00:22:11 What do home care workers talk about when together? We talk about clients and different scenarios, sharing and comparing and learning from each other. No two people are the same, or react the same way. Bunch of us talk without using names. Trade stories and how we dealt with things, and then we say enough of this! and talk about something else.

00:23:21 Union? Sounds overly dramatic, when I started helping friend and joined union, the union saved my emotional life. Hard when you don't have a purpose, union gave me a purpose. I enjoy the classes and have learned. Lobby days? Yes, my first lobby day I met my legislator, and I told him the story of my brother and he gave me a hug.

00:27:20 What would you tell someone who has never done care? About the delicate balance between respect and having to do what you need to do.

00:28:07 Do you feel that the community at large understands the work that you do? Some are very aware and caring, and there are more people that don't know what we do. So busy with their lives they don't think about what older people need, don't see caregiver in the same light as

other workers. It is like castes in India: we are the bottom caste that does the necessary tasks no one else wants to do. We give the person we are caring for a chance to have a life.

00:30:17 Hobbies, used to dance, but now can't so much. Was a city girl, but bought property because she rescued a colt. Volunteers at animal rescue, lots of animals at the house. Loves gardening, loves creating. Talks about her garden art project.

00:32:45 Anything else? I want people to know fulfilling being a caregiver can be.

00:33:36 Do a few more years? Yes, as long as I can. I will stay involved with the union until I can't anymore.

00:35:00 discussion about generational differences and the interest in "electronics." She thinks this could impact caregiving for the older generation, clash of cultures. We don't honor our elderly like we used to. Talks about caring for her mother and grandmother, it was just what you did.

00:38:00 Did things with grandparents, story of barn dance with Russian grandfather. I don't think this generation has had this experience because women have been allowed to blossom in lots of other ways than when I was younger. Will affect their willingness to take on the care of a parent. Not sure how it will work out. Staying in the home is not part of this generation like it used to be. They care, it is just different.

00:42:17 End of interview.